

# PEOPLE & THINGS

**T**HE proposal to admit Parliamentary representatives from Malta to the House of Commons is not so revolutionary as it might appear. If the conference which is to consider the proposal are searching for a precedent they may care to delve into the official returns of Members for the fourth and fifth decades of the sixteenth century.

They will find that Calais, the last Continental possession left to England of the once great Angevin empire, sent Members to Westminster from probably 1536 until 1558, when the French captured it, and only its name remained—engraved on Queen Mary's heart.

The reason, I suspect, had less to do with those economic problems which are influencing Malta today than with Henry VIII's determination to centralise his administration as much as possible.

I say "from probably 1536" because the returns of Members for the 1536 and 1539 Parliaments are missing. But there is other evidence in the form of a letter addressed to Thomas Cromwell, dated June 8, 1536, from one John Bartelet, informing the King's Minister that the Mayor and Aldermen of Calais had chosen Mr. Pryseley as their Burgess to attend Parliament and that he was setting out accordingly.

## W. S. M.

**A** PILGRIM to the celebrated villa at Cap Ferrat found Mr. Somerset Maugham continuing to lead the over-full life which, at eighty-one, is his elixir.

After a morning walk through the garden, which is one of the most beautiful on the Côte d'Azur, and a talk with the gardener, Mr. Maugham shuts himself away from the sunshine in the large airy top-floor studio, tests the nib of his pre-balpoint fountain-pen, and starts to write another page of the book whose subject remains, I believe, a secret even to Heinemann's.

At midday precisely (he is the most punctual and orderly of men) he goes down into the garden again and climbs up the terraces to his bathing pool where, after a tentative bounce on the spring-board, he dives neatly into the cool water and swims a few lengths in the workmanlike crawl he learned only two years ago.

## Civilisation

**A**FTER one, or perhaps two, cocktails before lunch—a Bacardi tinted pink with grenadine is a favourite—he enjoys the finest yet the simplest cooking to be found in the South of France. A light *Champagne nature* or one of the wines of the Côte, pleasantly chilled or exactly *chambre*, accompanies the meal, which often ends with an ice on whose constituents he likes to wager with his guests (unless they know the Tropics).

After talk on the terrace and

## By ATTICUS

a siesta, there is generally a game of bridge with one or another of the neighbours and an inevitable grumble over the high stakes they like to play. Then perhaps a dinner party or a light dinner with his companionable and highly intelligent secretary, Alan Searle, and early to bed.

Every year Mr. Maugham makes one or two expeditions into the world in addition to his regular autumn visit to London. Next month he goes to Austria for the Salzburg Festival in the new Rolls-Royce which has not yet arrived but in every detail of which he has been passionately concerned.

And so he moves on, civilised, happy, inquisitive, delighted with life, towards his eighty-second

world; and they are mercifully distant from the rowdy and overbearing displays which elsewhere pass muster as "traditionally Italian."

Mr. Gui laughed when I remarked on this. "There is another Italy," he said; and of this other Italy he is himself one of the finest examples. A practised and elegant writer, a friend of Debussy and d'Annunzio, with a close knowledge of Tennyson and Swinburne and the air of an ambassador in retirement, Mr. Gui is at home in all worlds.

His fifty years of service to music have made him, if anything, harder upon himself than ever. Only quite recently has it been possible to persuade him that his recreation of "The Barber of Seville" is nearly as fine as he would wish it to be. And there is one masterpiece, "Don Giovanni" which he will not touch at all.

"Impossible to realise," he said. "Too difficult. Even Toscanini has never attempted it." But then he paused, remembering the example of a close friend and neighbour in Tuscany. "Well," he said, "if I can conduct when I'm Berenson's age, I might have a try..."

## America's Masthead

**J**UST in time for American Independence Day last week, Mr. Monroe E. Deutsch, Vice-President of the

University of California, announced that the national motto of America: "E Pluribus Unum" was cribbed from the title page of "The Gentleman's Journal," a magazine published in London from 1691-94.

In turn the slogan was adopted by "The Gentlemen's Magazine," for which Benjamin Franklin wrote articles between 1752-1789, and for which he at one time considered becoming the circulation and advertising manager in America.

Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson were the committee appointed, on July 4, 1776, "to prepare a device for the seal of the United States of America" and Mr. Deutsch now declares that it was "through the instrumentality" of Benjamin Franklin that the motto of the London Magazine became the motto of America.

## The Soft Life

**E**NGLAND is peculiarly free from poisonous flora and fauna and there are only a handful of plants and toadstools, and one snake, to remind us that Nature snarls as well as smiles.

But when the Nottingham police some time ago busied themselves with the destruction of deadly nightshade and the Conservators of Mitcham Common have been talking of burning out their hemlock, one wonders how long our yew trees and laburnums will survive the "Age of Softness."

Some years ago our most eminent botanist came upon two old ladies uprooting deadly nightshade in a lane "because it was dangerous."

"Maybe," he said testily. "But it is a rare plant and anyway England is over-populated."



Rousseau's "Bohémienne Endormie."

birthday—a living reproach to successful men who feel bored or old.

## The Sleeping Gypsy

**O**NE of the most striking of the French pictures from America, which are now on show in the "Orangerie" in Paris, is the "Bohémienne Endormie" by the Douanier Rousseau, and France is now biting her nails at the memory of a letter which Rousseau wrote in July, 1898, to the Mayor of his birthplace, Laval, offering to sell the picture to the town for a song.

"The picture," he wrote, "is 'the Bohémienne Endormie,' and it measures two metres by one and a quarter. A wandering negress, a player of the mandoline, sleeps profoundly, a prey to fatigue, with her jar of drinking-water beside her. A lion passes by chance, touches her, but does not devour her. It is a very poetical moon-scape in a waterless desert. The gypsy wears oriental dress. I will let it go for 2,000 to 1,800 francs because I should be happy for the town of Laval to have a souvenir of one of its children."

The Mayor wrote back to say that the town had no funds for this purpose. Years later the picture was recommended by Picasso to the great American collector, John Quinn. At the Quinn sale in 1926 it fetched 500,000 francs. The price paid by the Museum of Modern Art in 1939 is not on record.

## Exemplary Maestro

**M**AESTRO Vittorio Gui's performances of Rossini at Glyndebourne are now accepted as the best things of their kind in the